

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2011 AT 10.00AM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Clarke (Chairman) Councillors Bowman S, Mrs Bradley, Cape, Mrs Farmer, Nedved and Mrs Riddle

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Bainbridge – Housing Portfolio Holder
Councillor Mrs Geddes – Community Engagement Portfolio Holder

COSP.17/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Glover.

COSP.18/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

COSP.19/11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2011 be noted.

COSP.20/11 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

There were no items which had been the subject of call-in.

COSP.21/11 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) presented report OS.04/11 which provided an overview of matters relating to the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel's work and included the latest version of the work programme and Forward Plan items which related to the Panel.

Mrs Edwards reported that:

- The Forward Plan of Executive key decisions, covering the period 1 February 2011 to 31 May 2011 had been published on 18 January 2011.
- Three references from the Executive had been included in the report:
 - EX.223/10 – Charges Review
 - EX.227/10 – Carlisle Community Plan
 - EX.007/11 – Policy Framework

- The first meeting of the Carlisle and Eden Community Safety Scrutiny Panel had taken place on 27 January 2011. The Panel Members who had attended the meeting updated the Panel. They felt disappointed with the meeting as they were unable to use the percentages that had been included in the paper work and there was a lack of budget knowledge which was key to making recommendations.
- The Panel had asked for an update on Young People not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs), it was suggested that the update be considered at the next meeting of Panel in place of an update on the Play Strategy.

RESOLVED – 1) That, subject to the issues raised above, the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Forward Plan items relevant to this Panel be noted.

2) That the following minute excerpts from Executive be noted:

EX.223/10 – Charges Review

EX.227/10 – Carlisle Community Plan

EX.007/11 – Policy Framework

3) That an update on Young People not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) be brought to the next meeting of the Panel in place of an update on the Play Strategy.

COSP.22/11 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Policy and Performance Manager (Mr O’Keeffe) submitted report PPP.04/11 which provided an update on the revised approach to performance reporting, links to the Corporate Plan and Team Appraisals.

Mr O’Keeffe reminded the Panel of the changes to performance monitoring and how performance would focus on local measures and the Corporate Plan key objectives and outcomes for communities.

He explained that the Corporate Plan actions were developed in September 2010 from the Corporate Plan 2010-13 which had been agreed by full Council in May 2010. In addition to ongoing monitoring of the actions, an annual review of the actions would be undertaken from February to March to incorporate feedback from the corporate planning process to ensure the actions were delivering the Council’s key priorities.

Mr O’Keeffe explained how the Corporate Plan would be linked to the Directorate/Services Plans and the Team Appraisals. He outlined the time tables for the reviewing and refreshing of the Plan and for the end of year performance report.

He added that the Overview and Scrutiny Panels were asked to consider which Corporate Plan actions they would like to be reported to in future performance reports, including the End of Year Performance report. He informed the Panel that,

although the Place Survey had been abolished, the Council would still need to collect data about the perceptions and experiences of its customers. The Policy and Performance Team aimed to replace the Survey with an efficient, effective and economical survey focused on the distinctiveness of the district. The new survey would provide service managers with insights into the responsiveness of their services and would strengthen the Council's knowledge of its communities and help prepare for a new set of community profiles once the Census 2011 data was released. Most importantly, the survey would make Members central to assessing the performance of the Council, an assessment based on Members' experiences and objective observations.

He explained that it was proposed that a baseline Members' survey would be undertaken in spring 2011 to feed into the End of Year Performance Report. Mr O'Keeffe highlighted the initial question framework and proposed timetable for Members. The survey would replace the Place Survey and would be a deliberate attempt to move away from statistical information. The Members Survey would be aimed at gathering Member's opinions on their own wards based on the information that residents in the ward gave to Elected Members and the information would then be fed into the Corporate Plan. He added that it was hoped that all Members would respond to the survey.

Mr O'Keeffe reminded the Panel of the support for a self assessment approach following the abolition of the Audit Commission, Comprehensive Area Baseline/Organisation Assessment, Place Survey and National Indicator set. The self assessment would focus on district council services and functions, and avoid partnerships formed around themes over which the Council had little or no direct influence.

Mr O'Keeffe reminded the Panel that there was a workshop scheduled for 16 March for Members and it was proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel allocation be discussed at that workshop.

Mr O'Keeffe gave an update on the number of Hate Incidents reported in Carlisle. 2010 showed an insignificant increase on previous years and, compared to five years ago, represented a 20% decrease.

In considering the update Members raised the following comments and questions:

- *Was there any feedback on how the new Team Appraisals were working?*

Mr O'Keeffe responded that the Team Appraisals and Directorate Planning had begun and feedback would be received as they were completed. Information from the Team Appraisals would be entered into Covalent to allow the information to be directly linked to the Corporate Plan.

- *Training needs had been the first item under the Transformation Actions in the report and a key item in the Corporate Plan. Members had concerns that the Team Appraisals would replace Individual Development Plans for staff and prevent them from gaining the training and skills that they required.*

Mr O’Keeffe explained that there would continue to be a role for Individual Appraisals, if an officer requested an individual appraisal the Manager would have to provide one. Managers had been briefed on Team Appraisals and had prepared staff in their teams with a Toolbox Talk. The Toolbox Talk explained to staff how the Appraisals would work and gave them time to think about individual training needs as well as team training needs before the Appraisal.

In response to a further question Mr O’Keeffe clarified that individual members of staff would not have to wait until the Team Appraisal to raise their training needs or the training needs of the team. The Organisational Development Manager co-ordinated training requests all through the year and produced the Corporate Training Directory which would be reviewed following all the Team Appraisals.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive confirmed that staff would continue to have the opportunity to have an individual appraisal and that there were many training opportunities for staff and managers within the Council. She explained that there had been some feedback on the proposals for the Team Appraisals and staff had seen the new appraisals as a good way of working as a team. She reminded the Panel that many authorities had cut the staff development budget but the City Council had chosen to retain the budget as it was important to ensure the relevant skill set was in place for the future of the authority.

The Assistant Director (Local Environment) (Ms Culleton) informed the Panel that she was a member of the Corporate Training Group as part of Workforce Planning. She explained that the Organisational Development Plan mirrored the Corporate Plan and was tied into the Transformation process and the future of the Council. She also added that the Team Appraisal was one opportunity for training but the Council gave many other opportunities to identify training and investment in staff.

A Member asked if the Team Appraisals would be annual or if they would be followed up on a regular basis by Managers.

Mr O’Keeffe stated that it was important to use the Team Appraisals as a separate exercise but embed them in the regular team meetings. He added that the Team Appraisals were a crucial part of the approach to performance but were critical to the organisation.

- *Was there an opportunity for Members to receive some Covalent training?*

Mr O’Keeffe suggested that Members may find a live demonstration of Covalent useful and he would look to carry this out in the first round of meetings in the next municipal year. If Members required training sooner then they were welcome to join in on the staff training or have a one to one training session.

- *A Member asked for clarification on the Hate Incidents update as the figures jumped from 2005/06 to 2008-2010.*

Mr O’Keeffe apologised to the Panel for not including the information from 2005/06 and explained that the reporting years had changed from financial to calendar years.

- *The Panel requested copies of the new Service Plans for each Directorate when they were completed.*

Mr O’Keeffe informed the Panel that the Service Plans would be ready and available at the beginning of the new municipal year to tie in with the start of the new budget.

- *Members had concerns with regard to the Members’ Survey. They felt that the proposed survey was a ‘cheaper option’ and would be moving the responsibility onto Members. They were concerned that the authority was moving from a random survey to asking individuals who had a vested interest in their wards for their opinions. The Council was asking Members to produce an objective assessment of views of people in their ward and Members felt that it may not be possible for one person to express the opinion of the whole ward. Members asked what the timetable for the survey would be, for clarification on how Members would complete the survey and why this method had been selected.*

Mr O’Keeffe confirmed that the Place Survey had been abolished and had been expensive to take part in. The Council had looked at different ways to gather the information and looked at the Members Survey as a way to strengthen the relationship with Members. He explained that the Council was interested in Members views and their perception of how their wards were changing. Members were not expected to canvass people in their wards just try to complete the survey in a generally objective view.

Members felt that it was important that all Members be encouraged to complete the questions by a set deadline and suggested that the word ‘survey’ was not used.

Mr O’Keeffe informed the Panel that the draft questions would be taken to the Members Development Group and this would be a good opportunity to test the approach.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive confirmed that Members were right to suggest that the responsibility was being moved to them and that was because Members were the authentic voice of their local communities. Responses to the Place Survey had sometimes been low in actual numbers and the Council had to consider if those responses were actually representative of the communities. The Chief Executive agreed to look at the questions that would be asked and she was confident that Members could respond to the questions on behalf of residents as they were about the community that they represented. She explained that the survey would be a good opportunity for Members to help shape the Corporate Plan.

Mr O’Keeffe added that the information gained from the survey would be used in conjunction with other sources of information for the Corporate Plan and would also need some form of challenge to ensure the information was robust.

- *Members felt that it would be beneficial to have some input into how the survey was structured and what detail would be required.*

Mr O’Keeffe agreed and stated that the survey would be considered by the Member Development Group and he hoped that there could be a trial of the survey before it was rolled out to all Members.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Corporate Performance Monitoring Update be welcomed;

2) That Members looked forward to the opportunity to complete the Members Survey and encouraged all Members to complete the survey at the relevant time.

COSP.23/11 COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITY SCHEME

The Policy and Performance Manager (Mr O’Keeffe) presented report PPP.03/11 which provided the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Equality Scheme.

Mr O’Keeffe reminded the Panel that the Comprehensive Equality Scheme had been adopted by the City Council on September 2010 to ensure the Council complied with the duties of the Equality Act and to help meet the requirements of the ‘Achieving’ level of the Equality Framework for Local Government (ELFG).

He added that following the introduction of the Equality Act and the Council’s successful Diversity Peer Assessment in October 2010, the Scheme had been revised and updated to reflect the most recent changes in legislation and findings from the Peer Assessment.

Mr O’Keeffe explained that the updated Corporate Equality Scheme had been attached to report PPP.03/11 and he gave a summary of the changes to the document. Further amendments to the Scheme were delegated by Council to the Corporate Equality Group. The Group considered the amendments at their meeting on 26 January and referred the report to Scrutiny for consideration. Comments from Scrutiny would be reported to the next meeting of the Group and then the final document would be published.

Mr O’Keeffe added that the draft report from Local Government Improvement and Development on the findings of the Peer Assessment included recommendations to improve the Council’s approach to equalities. The recommendations had been considered by the Corporate Equality Group and the outcomes would be fed into the Corporate Equality and Diversity Action Plan. In addition to the recommendations the Group would include the ‘areas for consideration’ within the new action plan. The areas for consideration were set out under the five performance sections of the EFLG. The Action Plan would be ready in draft for the next Corporate Equality Group meeting on 30 March 2011.

In considering the Scheme Members raised the following comments and questions:

- *Members raised serious concerns that the Socio-Economic Duty section had been removed from the Scheme, they asked why it had been removed and suggested it should remain within the Scheme as best practice for the Council.*

Mr O’Keeffe explained that the Duty was no longer required by law and the steer from the Corporate Equality Group was to focus attention on the duties of the Equality Act (2000) as it was felt that the Act gave authorities a lot to comply with and there were fewer resources to carry out the work. He informed the Panel that Rurality had been removed from the Act but the Group had decided to leave it in the Scheme as best practice.

Members felt very strongly that the Socio-Economic Duty remained in the Scheme as best practice as there were deprived areas and areas in need across the whole district. Members were also concerned that people may feel discriminated against because of socio economic factors and may take action against the authority. Members were keen to move the Council towards ‘Excellent’ and felt that leaving the Duty in the Scheme would assist in reaching the goal.

- *Members welcomed the inclusion of apprenticeship schemes in the Corporate Equality and Diversity Action Plan and asked for further details on funding. Members also asked if there was any feedback from staff within the authority on the possible introduction of apprenticeships during a time a change.*

Mr O’Keeffe understood that there was support for apprenticeship schemes within the authority and stated that he would provide a written answer for Members.

- *The website address on page 10 of the report would need to be changed to a shorter site address.*
- *Was there a timetable for moving the authority to ‘Excellent’?*

Mr O’Keeffe responded that the timetable would evolve over the coming year and the authority would reflect on its position by late summer. He stated that there would be a cost implication for the authority to set a date for an assessment for accreditation and there was some discussion with the County Council regarding options available. He added that regardless of the actual accreditation the Council would continue to strive to be excellent.

- *How would basic awareness of Equality and Diversity be provided to Members and staff who had been in the authority for some time?*

Mr O’Keeffe explained that managers were kept up to date by completing Equality Impact Assessments. An e-learning package was being developed with a view to allowing Members and staff to refresh their awareness.

- *Under Service Delivery, Members should be included with employees and other people in the sentence ‘Employees and other people providing Council services to the public are entitled to be treated fairly and with respect’.*
- *Inappropriate language should be included in the Scheme.*
- *Members asked if CIEP funding would continue.*

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that final funding of £100,000 would be coming into Cumbria. She added that it was unclear what the Government would do in the future with regard to the Equality and Diversity agenda.

RESOLVED – 1) That the comments and amendments of the Panel as outlined above be referred to the Corporate Equality Group;

2) That the Corporate Equality Group be urged to reconsider the inclusion of the Socio-Economic Duty in the Comprehensive Equality Scheme.

COSP.24/11 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Public and Press were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph number (as indicated in brackets against the minutes) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act.

COSP.25/11 TRANSFORMATION UPDATE – THE COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND HEALTH SERVICE

(Public and Press excluded by virtue of Paragraph 2)

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) (Mr Gerrard) presented report CD.02.11 which outlined the principal elements of the transformation and restructure process linked to the Communities, Housing and Health Service within the Community Engagement Directorate.

Mr Gerrard gave an overview of the process which brought together the three service areas of Community Support, Housing and Health and Sport and Recreation. The objectives of which, were to promote shared working, be more efficient in order to reduce costs and achieve a stronger and more consistent relationship with communities across Carlisle.

He added that the new service would be key in the development of locality working. Within the transformation restructure staff would have designated geographic responsibilities, alongside being thematic leads. This would enable them to develop close and supportive links with Elected Members and local groups and facilities. There would be new opportunities where the Council should properly act as a co-ordinator or enabler and the new structure would allow the Council to better respond to the opportunities.

Much of the work of the service related to the most vulnerable members of the community and included some statutory responsibilities but it would be most effective and successful if it sought, within available resources, to work with communities across the district, encouraging partnerships and sharing good practice.

Mr Gerrard gave an overview of the timetable for the transformation and the new structure for the Communities, Housing and Health Service and he explained the current position with regard to redundancies and voluntary redundancies

In response to members questions Mr Gerrard explained how Private Sector Enforcement would be carried out and how the Community Development officers would operate within the Directorate.

He informed the Panel of ongoing work with Carlisle Leisure Limited and of the work that they carried out in the local communities.

He acknowledged Members concerns regarding the future of the SAFE clubs and at the request of the Panel updated Members on the current situation with regard to grant aid applications.

A Member spoke in some detail on the issue of grant support to community centres with particular emphasis on staffing, TUPE arrangements and volunteers.

Mr Gerrard reiterated that support would be provided to the Community Centres by the Community Development Officers.

At the request of the Panel Mr Gerrard gave an update on the Community Resource Centre and agreed to give a more detailed update at a future meeting of the Panel.

Members raised concerns with regard to the future of Disabled Facilities grants and the support received from Riverside Carlisle and the Government.

RESOLVED – That the detailed update from the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) be welcomed.

(The meeting ended at 12.37pm)